

Art of Spanish Colonial South America

Week 1 question

There was a question about the location of the individual paintings in Rogier van der Weyden's triptych altarpiece. I had mentioned in class that these were dispersed and also that there was a copy (that is, at least one copy) in Spain of this altarpiece that Juan II purchased and donated to the charterhouse (Carthusian monastery) at Miraflores.

The copy was commissioned by Queen Isabella. It might have been painted by one of her court artists, Michel Sittow (whose work we looked at in class) or by Juan de Flandés (whom we mentioned). For a long time, scholars were uncertain about which of the two paintings was the original Miraflores altarpiece and which was the copy. But eventually it was determined which was the original and which the copy. Infrared reflectography showed underdrawings with changes in one and not the other (in an original, the artist would make changes as he proceeded; a copyist wouldn't need to do this); and dendrochronology (tree ring dating) of the panels showed one to be from the 1430s or shortly thereafter, and the other from the 1490s.

But on to the actual question. The original Miraflores altarpiece is intact and is located in the Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin. The copy is the dispersed version, with the panel of *Christ Appearing to His Mother* located in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, and the panels of the *Nativity* and the *Pietà* located in the royal chapel of the cathedral in Granada, Spain.

